



NOAA Teacher at Sea
David Babich
Onboard NOAA Ship FAIRWEATHER
July 5 – 14, 2005

Mission: Hydrography

Day 7: Sunday, July 9, 2006

Shumagin Islands, Alaska

Weather

WX Rain

Wind ESE 20 kts

Sea 14ft

Temps 50's

Science and Technology

The ship has been on "24-hour Ship Hydro" all day, and for the foreseeable future. When the weather is a bit rough, like we have now, we can not send out the smaller boats to survey areas closer to shore. This rougher weather, however, is not a problem for the well-built FAIRWEATHER. Each day, the navigational officer and the survey technicians decide what area in the deeper water needs surveying. This area is then further broken up into smaller, more manageable polygons. Each small polygon is created based on the expected depth of the sea. They try to make the smaller polygons of similar depths. The FAIRWEATHER can then pass over these areas using similar radar to that used on the smaller survey launches, except radar more appropriate for deeper water. The FAIRWEATHER can continue this mapping of the ocean bottom around the clock for many days in a row. When the weather starts to calm down, the ship will then return to more off-shore surveying.

Personal Log

While out in deeper water, I've enjoyed standing on the bridge watching and looking out over the ocean. Today we were fortunate to see humpback whales playing in the waters close to the boat. First, you spot the waterspout shooting out over the water's surface. Then if you're lucky, about a minute later you'll see



A Humpback whale breaching off the FAIRWEATHER's stern.

the whale breach, or jump out of the water. When a whale breaches, a cheer is heard from everyone in the bridge, as it's a special show for even the experienced sailor. The two types of whales most common in the area are Minke and Humpback whales, but I'm still holding out hope I'll see some Orca's!

FAIRWEATHER Profile: Physical Scientist Megan Palmer



Physical Scientist Megan Palmer takes a break before her survey watch begins.

Megan is one of three physical scientists currently aboard ship. She actually works at NOAA's home office in Seattle but rotates out to ships several times each year. She is currently spending six weeks on the FAIRWEATHER and earlier in this year spent a month out at sea in Hawaii with another NOAA ship. Her role on the FAIRWEATHER varies. She's

primarily here to offer support wherever needed. She helps review survey's, train employees, helps facilitate communication between the ship and home office, as well as increase her own awareness of what goes on aboard ship.

At an early age, Megan wanted to be an architect. However, she was always interested in the math and sciences. In college at Frostburg State she greatly enjoyed taking environmental classes which eventually led her to a degree in geography.

It wasn't long before Megan found a position with NOAA and has been very happy ever since. She loves being on water, although she admits it can sometimes be a love/hate relationship. At times you just want off the boat. But the ability to use her geography background and the many opportunities NOAA offers employees, really excites her about this job.

For those girls thinking about a possible career with NOAA, Megan says, "Go for it. Don't be intimidated by math and science courses." After all, one third of the personnel aboard the FAIRWEATHER are female, including women in the deck department, officers, survey department, and scientists!